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Looking for Repeat Business and Referrals?

By Pamela Grover

We've all heard it said before that maintaining your current clients is more cost-effective than chasing after new ones. In a world where we are bombarded with communications from junk mail to cell phones to faxes, it's no wonder that we shy away from considering the use of an often-overlooked yet important marketing tool — Email.

Making in-person visits is the best way to retain your clients because nothing beats personal relationships. Placing phone calls would come in second. But let's face it. Not everyone can afford many personal visits, and in this age of voicemail, it's becoming more and more difficult to catch someone in their office.

Consider email as the third way to retain your clients. Email is one of the most economical ways to keep in touch with our clients when used appropriately. Yet many of us don't know how to maximize its use for our business. A PricewaterhouseCoopers survey found that 83% of Internet users felt email was their primary reason for using the Internet.

In following some simple rules of email etiquette, you can implement an email campaign that will not only help you retain your clients but save you time and money.

Create an Email Campaign*

- Develop a strategy. *What is the purpose of your campaign?*
- Define your objectives. *What are you trying to accomplish?*
- Create the plan. *How are you going to achieve your goals?*
- Target your message. *Whom are you going after?*
- Create the offer. *What do you want to tell them?*
- Determine frequency. *How often are you going to communicate?*
- Test your assumptions. *How does the response change if you tweak something?*
- Measure the results. *How well did you do?*

*As published in *Email Marketing* by Sterne and Priore

Although the email campaign outlined here can be used for bringing in new business, think of this process for retaining your current clients.

Collect Email Addresses

At your first paid consultation, ask your client for his/her email address. Be sure to clearly explain how you will and will not use that email address. In addition to regular business correspondence, you may send them useful information about your products and services.



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Keep Your Clients Coming Back

You don't necessarily have to implement a buy-ten-get-one-free program to keep your clients coming back. Sometimes it's a simple matter of reminding them that you're still thinking of them. Offering a newsletter can be a very effective way to keep your name in the forefront of their minds. Sending them useful organizing tips, a special limited-time offer, or just a pat on the back may be just as effective.

Frequency and Timing

Because email is so easy to use, you might be tempted to send it more often than your clients would like. I think a safe frequency to start with is monthly. It's OK to ask your clients what they would prefer and tweak the timing accordingly. Keeping the relationship alive by not letting them forget who you are is the key.

Email Etiquette

With all transmissions, it's important to let your clients know that: (1) You respect their privacy and will not sell or share their information and, (2) they can easily unsubscribe to your mailing list (with instructions on how to do this).

Email Marketing Resources

- *Email Marketing*, by Jim Sterne and Anthony Priore
- *Writing Effective Email*, by Nancy and Tom Flynn

Using email to retain current clients can be very effective for your business. Take the appropriate steps to create a purposeful email campaign and you may see it pay off with more repeat business and referrals. And who couldn't use a little of that?

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